Title: Need to increase the wages of Labourers covered under EPF Scheme in view of price rise.

*SHRI P. LINGAM (TENKASI): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to raise a matter of urgent public importance pertaining to the Employees Provident Fund Act of 1952. This was conceived for extending pension benefits to the working class to enable them to get food, medicine and medical care after their retirement. In 1995, along with the Minimum Wages Act, another legislation came in place to ensure monthly pension as a minimum financial compensation for the working class in the wake of spiraling up of prices. According to a formula that was worked out then, contribution to EPF for pension will be from the worker who will pay 8.33 per cent of the wages. Such a fund that has become a very huge in the hands of the Government now touching lakhs and crores of rupees has not extended the benefits to the workers to a desired level. This fund created with an intention to benefit the workers and their families after their retirement, especially during their old age, has not hit the target.

This is like any other well meaning social security scheme. But the working class, who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of EPF, are not getting adequate support, security and protection in the twilight of their lives. The monthly pension paid to the workers from the EPF is found to be much less than the monthly pension paid to the aged people by various State Governments. This is not commensurate with the increased prices and inflation rates. The workers are not able to meet their requirements as the pension paid to them is found to be meagre and the workers are not able to meet their needs in the wake of price rise which is not being addressed to by the Government that administers EPF. Even the minimum wages that has been fixed by the very same Government has not been taken into account at all while paying a meagre pension to the retired and aged working class people. The small pension they get does not help them to meet their

basic medical requirements. They are forced to remain as burden to their families. Various sectors like textiles and garments, matches and crackers, beedi and cigar, power and plantation find lakhs of workers who are left to fend for themselves through EPF which is not helping them effectively.

Hence I urge upon the Government to increase the monthly pension provided under the EPF Scheme. The workers who have parked their money right from their prime of youth are finding themselves as disappointed aged people as the returns are discouraging. The Government must come forward to fix the minimum monthly pension under EPF to be at least Rs. 4,000 per month.